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POLAND

The Soviets have responded to Solidarity's work action on Saturday by publicly criticizing the union's leadership for the first time.

Past Soviet condemnations of Solidarity--even the most caustic TASS articles on 8 December and 1 January--put the blame on local branches or specific factions that were allegedly using the cover of the trade union for "antisocialist" activity. Reports in the Soviet media yesterday and Saturday, however, replayed Polish press articles criticizing "the leadership" of Solidarity for rejecting the government's proposal concerning the five-day workweek and organizing the work stoppage.

One Soviet report yesterday repeated the Polish news agency's contention that at some enterprises "Solidarity officials organized pickets and did not let workers into the shops." More ominously, it cited an open letter from a meeting of "veterans of the workers' movement" in Katowice--not reported by the Polish media--that claimed "forces hostile to socialism" were trying to take over the workers' movement in Poland and creating "a growing threat of counterrevolution."

On Sunday, a Soviet official at a public foreign affairs lecture went so far as to describe Solidarity as "that anti-Soviet labor union." He accused Solidarity leader Walesa of making "antisocialist" statements--the most direct Soviet condemnation of Walesa thus far.

The lecturer ridiculed the Polish workers' demand for Saturdays off at a time when their country is in such bad economic shape that it has had to receive special aid from the Soviet Union and East Germany. He ended by asserting, to the applause of those in attendance, that, as in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, "counterrevolution will not succeed."

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The lecture and the press articles continue the trend in Soviet commentary toward a more critical and pessimistic view of the situation in Poland that was presaged by the 1 January TASS attack on Solidarity. The generally more upbeat coverage that followed the Warsaw Pact summit in December lasted only as long as the lull in Solidarity's activities during that month.

Domestic Situation in Poland

Solidarity leaders have yet to respond to the ouster of sit-in demonstrators by local authorities in southern Poland, suggesting that they sense a need for caution in dealing with what some of them see as a provocation.

Despite Kania's tough rhetoric on Saturday against agitation in the countryside, a group representing Poland's private farmers has threatened to call selective "warning strikes" tomorrow if a government commission does not begin discussions on an independent labor union for the farmers by early today. Solidarity has called for a state of "strike readiness" in southern factories and has set a Friday deadline for government talks on the farmers' union. This is the first time that Solidarity has raised the possibility of a strike in support of farmers' demands.

Following the recent successful ouster of sit-in demonstrators on Sunday, authorities in another southern town yesterday evicted strikers from offices that had been occupied for almost a week. The two successive actions are small but significant reassertions of the government's authority. Several other sit-in strikes are still under way in the southern part of the country.

A Solidarity spokesman, meanwhile, told [redacted] yesterday that the union expects negotiations with the government over the issue of a shorter workweek soon after Walesa returns from Rome on Monday. An adviser to Solidarity said that the union had previously discussed two options--allowing factories to settle the matter at the local level and asking laborers to work some Saturdays on a voluntary basis. The adviser provided no sense of what approach the union might favor.

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The adviser also offered his personal opinion that the regime's idea of extending the workday by one-half hour was "pure nonsense," and he reiterated earlier Solidarity statements that the main problem is that the regime cannot be trusted. The regime's recent efforts to show a tougher posture can only add to this sense of mistrust and make eventual discussions very difficult.

Military Situation

We have detected no change in the status of military forces in and around Poland over the weekend.

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